midnight

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REPORTER DOROTHY KILGALLEN being frisked at the Jack Ruby trial. She was found dead in her New York apartment a few days before she planned to crack the Kennedy assassination case wide open.

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Murdered..

For Having Too Much On JFK's Killers

Dorothy Kilgallen, the most respected female journalist of her day, died because she knew too much about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

This is what a few isolated souls intimated at the time of her mysterious death on November 8, 1965.

Now there is serious reason to believe that Miss Kilgallen was, indeed, murdered. That she took a fatal dose of alcohol and pills in her New York apartment not by accident or mistake or in desperation.

There is evidence that Dorothy Kilgallen was getting set to "crack open" the Kennedy case.

And for whatever story was on the tip of her typewriter, Dorothy Kilgallen paid the supreme sacrifice.

What did this slight, bright-eyed, ever-eager reporter know?

From the evidence still around, it's apparent that Miss Kilgallen had uncovered the now notorious "Cuban Connection." That is: information regarding the CIA's abortive assassination attempts on Fidel Castro and the Cuban dictator's *alleged plot to "rub out"* John F. Kennedy in return.

It took the American people 13 years and a Special Senate Investigating Committee to finally get this same information.

But the question now is: did Dorothy know more?

Her son Kerry Kollmar thinks so. Her biographer, Lee Israel, thinks so. And assassination bloodhounds Mark Lane and Penn Jones Jr. think so too. Each for his own reasons.

At the time of her death Miss Kilgallen was in trouble with the CIA and the FBI. Somehow — and still nobody knows how — she got hold of and published Jack Ruby's testimony months before the Warren Commission's report was made public.

DOROTHY KILGALLEN was ready to break the Kennedy assassination case wide open.

This was her second journalistic coup in the Kennedy case. In March of 1964 she had wiggled her way into Judge Joe Brown's private chamber in Dallas for a private 30-minute interview with Jack Ruby — right in the middle of his trial. She was the only reporter to get to Lee Harvey Oswald's killer.

As a result of these scoops, the CIA and FBI were on her tail. They questioned her repeatedly; they followed her; and they bugged her telephone.

Undaunted, Dorothy went ahead with her investigation, continued her appearances on the "What's My Line" TV show and churned out her nationally syndicated "Voice of Broadway" newspaper column and she told the FBI and CIA nothing.

The government agencies responded by amassing page after page of secret reports on Dorothy Kilgallen.

Miss Israel, her biographer, and Kerry, her 22-year-old son, have been trying for a year to get those files released. The FBI and the CIA say "no" — even though young Kollmar is entitled to them under the "Freedom of Information Act."

Their next attack is to take the battle before the newly-formed Special Senate Select Committee on Assassinations.

What could possibly be in those secretive yellowed pages?

Maybe the truth about the Kennedy assassination and perhaps even the truth about the death of Dorothy Kilgallen.

Mark Lane, author of "Rush to Judgment," the first important book to question the Warren Commission findings, was working steadily with Dorothy in the months before she died.

In an exclusive interview with MIDNIGHT, Lane recounted his association with Miss Kilgallen.

"She made up code names for me and for her. I think I was Mr. Robinson and she was Miss Parker.

"She was convinced that her phone was tapped by the FBI and she was sure that mine was too. Therefore, whoever called was supposed to call from an outside pay phone, using a code name. And then we would meet someplace.

"I met her on numerous occasions and the last time that I saw her, she told me she was going to Dallas. She said she thought she had a contact down there that was going to break the case wide open. She told me nothing more than that.

"When she came back to New York City I think I was on the West Coast. And by the time I got back to New York, she was dead.

"They said she was drinking and then took barbiturates," Lane continued. "I don't think anybody suggested that it was suicide. I don't think anybody who knew her would have suggested that.

"But I don't think that under the influence of alcohol she could have taken pills and taken too many. Of course, it's possible. But I don't think so.

"She mentioned nothing to me at all about a link between the JFK assassination and the pro-Castro Cubans.

"Kilgallen just told me she thought she had something that would break the case wide open and then she was dead."

Lane is not the only one to question the circumstances of her death at 52.

Lee Israel has been hard at work for a long time researching and writing Miss Kilgallen's life story. Her book will be out in a few months.

Miss Israel told MIDNIGHT that "Dorothy was heavily into pills and booze, so it could have been an unfortunate accident. I don't know. I've never seen the autopsy report."

What she has seen, however, is the death certificate. Two of them, in fact. "And they're totally different," she told MIDNIGHT. "For example, one has the time of death as 12 noon yet her body was discovered before 12 noon."

Miss Kilgallen left no unprinted stories, notes or even scraps of paper concerning her investigation into President Kennedy's death. At least, none that were found.

Miss Israel believes that if there's anybody around with information — anybody who knew what Dorothy was up to — it's her father James Kilgallen, himself once a crack reporter. But the elder Kilgallen is not talking.

MIDNIGHT contacted James Kilgallen. Over the years, he said, he has made it a policy not to discuss Dorothy's activities.

"I understand your job and would like to help," he told MIDNIGHT, "but it would hurt someone else. I won't say anything."

Kerry Kollmar, one of three children from Dorothy's marriage to producer Richard Kollmar, is like his mother. He is unrelenting when it comes to finding the truth. Kerry, who was 10 when Dorothy died, is determined to discover what his mother knew and the circumstances of her death.

Texas newspaperman Penn Jones Jr. is the author of four books on the assassination of President Kennedy. He was one of the first to link Miss Kilgallen's death to the events in Dallas two years before.

In his 1966 book "Forgive My Grief Volume I," Jones lists Miss Kilgallen's death with a score of other mysterious deaths — all people involved, in one way or another, with Kennedy's assassination.

Jones also reports in Volume II that, "Shortly before her death, Miss Kilgallen told a friend in New York that she was going to New Orleans in five days and break the case wide open."

Jones told MIDNIGHT that he received this information from her television make-up man in whom she confided.

Dorothy never lived long enough to take that trip to New Orleans — the city where Lee Harvey Oswald was so active in pro- and anti-Cuban extremist groups.

Jones, like Miss Israel, questions the absence of notes, scratchings — anything left behind by the meticulous reporter — relevant to her investigation of Kennedy's slaying. He suggests that a close friend of Miss Kilgallen's, a Mrs. Earl E.T. Smith, may have been the one entrusted with any papers.

Perhaps not coincidentally, Jones writes, Mrs. Smith died in New York of unknown causes two days after Dorothy Kilgallen.

Mrs. Smith was the well-known socialite Florence Pritchett, and Earl E.T. Smith is the one-time U.S. Ambassador to Cuba and now the mayor of Palm Beach, Fla.

"So many people knew both Dorothy and Florence Pritchett," Lee Israel says, "that they ended up going to one funeral after another."

Was Dorothy Kilgallen afraid that her meddling in the Kennedy assassination would get her killed? Mark Lane asked that question once.

Dorothy answered: "That's all inconsequential. They killed the President of the United States. The government is not prepared to tell us how it happened or who did it. And I'm going to do everything I can to find out how it happened."

Dorothy Kilgallen did all anybody could.

DOROTHY BEING FRISKED at the Ruby trial. She had a contact in Dallas but never got the chance to reveal what he told her.

DOROTHY APPEARED in her regular spot on the "What's My Line" TV show the night before her death.